

# News Release

U.S. Department of the Interior / Bureau of Land Management  
Twin Falls District Fire and Aviation / 400 West F Street / Shoshone, Idaho 83352

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 13, 2007

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## BLM Fire Program Streamlining for Summer 2007

SHOSHONE, ID- The upcoming 2007 fire season will see many changes and improvements for the Bureau of Land Management Twin Falls District Fire and Aviation Program. BLM fire staff spent this past winter identifying goals and solutions to further increase safety, efficiency, professionalism, training and leadership that will be put into practice beginning this summer.

To ensure additional leadership and experience, significant changes are being made to the way each BLM fire engine is staffed. Formerly, three engines would respond to a fire together. This summer, each engine will have the leadership and experience to operate independently. In the past, firefighters were limited in their ability to gain needed training through the fire season because their leadership was required among their engine group. Now, firefighters will be able to work towards their training goals and increase their skills, leadership and experience.

In order to accomplish this goal, Twin Falls BLM will decrease the number of fire engines that will be responding to wildfires. BLM has formerly operated two sizes of engines, with the smaller holding only 300 gallons of water and the larger carrying 900 gallons. Beginning this summer, crews will staff only the larger engine, resulting in a more efficient response and attack time on wildfires. A total of at least 22 engines will operate seven days a week from Shoshone, Burley and Twin Falls, as well as remote guard stations across south central Idaho.

“I am convinced we can do more with less,” BLM Fire Management Officer Chris

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Simonson said. “The changes we are making for this season will provide for a more efficient response to wildfires, as well as for the safety and growth of our firefighters. Our program is committed to doing what is needed to become the best that we can be.”

Each year, the BLM extends jobs to qualified firefighters wishing to return for another summer season. These firefighters have at least one year of experience and serve as crew members to continue gaining firefighting skills. Because of the decrease in engines and the amount of returning employees, BLM is hiring very few new personnel for the 2007 season.

“It’s always good to have new blood in an organization,” Simonson continued. “However, we have to make sure we have the right leadership to be able to hire new folks. As we enable firefighters to gain the training they need, we will increase our leadership and thus our engine staffing capabilities. This summer will serve as a stepping stone for potential staffing increases in the future.”

All of these efforts across the Twin Falls District Fire and Aviation Program are occurring in the name of safety, efficiency and professionalism.

“Safety has always been and will always be our number one priority,” Simonson said. “Wildfire can be a dangerous business by nature, but in every effort or change we make, we are trying to even better ensure that our folks get home safe.”

For further information, contact Sky Buffat at (208) 308-4198.

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